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Maelstrom

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MAELSTROM

by

Gertrude L. Teijink

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In partial fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the Supervision of Professor Karen Kunc

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2010

MAELSTROM

Gertrude L. Teijink, M.F.A.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Adviser: Karen Kunc

My work is a confrontation with the conflict between our everyday activities, and the fleetingness of our existence. We are dragged through time and through space, but ultimately we are unavoidably lost in a swirl of oblivion. Given this dissonance, I question the meaning of our everyday activities. Can we find satisfaction with what we do? And why are we compelled to do it? The case I try to make for the meaning of life's repetitive or renewal actions is made largely in reference to myself, which gives my work an undeniable autobiographical component.

For my thesis work, I photograph trivial objects and common scenes from my personal sphere, and print this digital imagery on paper and fabric. Each of these flexible materials allows my print works to expand into the third dimension, through cutting, folding, and sewing. Through such warping the printed object manifests itself in a more accessible way to the viewer in a shared space. The viewer is led to believe they see trivial pointless objects, but they are deceived. What is real and what is imaginary? This is a forlorn universe, with works even bigger than life, doors that cannot be opened or closed, plates too soft to break, and a table too askew. Something unsettling starts to shimmer through. Are the images real at all? I have set into motion a confusion between familiar images that disconnect themselves from the functionality of their tangible counterparts. Things and images of things, reality and imagination whirl around each other. With the leftovers of human presence and absence as art objects, I pose questions about what remains and what is life's purpose.

Such investigations of my ephemerality and the purpose of my activities are far from easy. They force me to think deeply about my motivations and myself. It is in this confrontational context that my art paraphrases my life. My works and my thoughts merge: the making process and the thinking process are feeding each other, in a symbiotic way. For example, in my piece *Null and Void*, there is such an interaction as I seek to visualize a void, to present "what once was but is now lost". I cut away the tableware from a dining table top and the shapes direct focus to their ambivalence. Their absence causes voids in the table while they emanate absence themselves. On the other hand, the imaged soft sculptures of almost empty, dirty plates, the used silverware, and the leftovers in the pots in *Vanitas* make clear that dinner is over. Uninhabited and futile,

the images invoke feelings of desolate loss. I am revealing this dialogue between myself and the pieces as a mutual reinterpretation.

This maelstrom of life into art speaks for itself. In its cathartic making I discovered purpose. A purpose that interprets and validates existence, a purpose that elevates the mundane, a purpose that turns daily handwork into meaning. A metamorphosis of unbearable void into fulfilling existence. At this point I encourage the viewer to follow my steps, and I hope my work will guide them through where the useless and the meaningful collide, and where the familiar and the alien tumble.



view from north wall



view from south wall



Pendulum



Alptraum



overview



Vanish



overview



Ball Game



Ball Game (detail)



overview



Null and Void



overview



Vanitas



Vanitas (detail)



overview



Toil, Grind, Twine and Sag



Toil, Grind, Twine and Sag (detail)



Wrapped Up



Buoyant with Inside Out (back)



Buoyant